

SPLASH 2004: NOAA Ship McArthur Weekly Science Report

19 August 2004

Jay Barlow, Cruise Leader

SCIENCE SUMMARY: Thursday, 12 August to Wednesday, 18 August 2004

This week has not been good for weather or humpbacks, but it has been very interesting. I'm also sitting on some really hot new information that should be in next week's weekly report. Let me see if I can keep it bottled up for another week.

We were on our westward trek out the Aleutian chain and we've been battling wind and fog most of the week. Weather got so rough last Saturday that we anchored up in the protected waters on the Bering side of Adak Island. We even had a chance to go ashore, walk about, get terrorized by eagles, and visit the local-color bar. Adak is a curious place. It was abandoned as a military base about two years ago. Now it is inhabited by about 75 year-round residents and 200 additional summer contractors, fishermen, and vacationers (I'm kidding about the latter). It resembles a ghost town ... no ... more like a ghost suburbia. A cookie-cutter town plucked out of Anywhere USA and plopped down on an Aleutian Island. Fitting a Saturday in Anywhere, two residents were seen out mowing their grass lawns. I guess old habits die hard. Of course, being a small place, there are no signs indicating which buildings might be a general store or a bar. Fortunately, everyone we met on Adak (including fellow whale researcher, Don Croll), knew where the bar was.

We managed to work most of Sunday, but Sunday night winds drove us to seek shelter in behind yet another unpronounceable Aleutian volcano. Grateful for its shelter, we spent Monday morning pacing back and forth, waiting for the winds to die. Monday afternoon was actually quite nice and we began our race out to the end of the Aleutian Island chain. We feel the press of time and don't want to be caught far to the west when the next storm takes aim at the Aleutians. Unfortunately, that meant working in some marginally windy and very foggy conditions. Finally, however, conditions cleared up on Wednesday. Finally, also, we found the first humpback whales of the entire week. Also, of note, yesterday we reached the very edge of Russia. Not the land, of course, but the edge of the Russian EEZ.

Despite the dearth of humpback whales, we had a productive week. We got 45 ID photographs and three biopsies from killer whales. Most were identified as "probably resident-type," but some were thought to be "transient-type" killer whales. We also crossed two notable lines ... the 180° mark (longitude to the max) ... and the date line (a step into tomorrow).

Now, I cannot help myself. I won't give it all away, but today we had a REALLY GREAT day. Imagine the color blue.

CATALOG NEWS:

Work is advancing in the creation of physical photographic catalogs of both humpback whales and killer whales. Cornelia, Beth and Seri have numbered 276 humpback whale flukes with SWFSC catalog numbers and have another 50 photographs still to enter from Leg 1. Also, Michael Richlen has completed a catalog of 75 dorsal fin/saddle patch photographs from killer whales on Leg 1, most with matching left and right sides. Seeing these catalogs develop during a cruise is certainly a rewarding experience and a first for SWFSC cruises.

Sightings and Effort Summary for Marine Mammals

Date	Start/Stop Time	Position	Total Distance	Avg. Beaufort
081204	0703	N53:27.88 W168:29.54	18.6 nmi	5.9
	0921	N53:17.26 W168:55.16		
081304	0710	N51:57.38 W172:35.29	126.9 nmi	5.3
	2048	N51:44.56 W175:58.21		
081504	0909	N51:54.76 W176:29.20	86.9 nmi	4.8
	2109	N51:40.54 W178:47.24		
081604	1219	N52:00.22 E179:26.97	36.6 nmi	3.3
	1959	N51:48.37 E178:40.36		
081704	0713	N51:25.70 E176:42.01	67.2 nmi	2.2
	2124	N52:13.91 E173:44.22		
081804	0723	N52:47.65 E172:07.02	76.3 nmi	2.0
	2132	N53:04.87 E169:42.18		

CODE	SPECIES	TOT#
037	Orcinus orca	13
046	Physeter macrocephalus	13
071	Balaenoptera acutorostrata	5
076	Megaptera novaeangliae	2
078	unid. small whale	3
079	unid. large whale	1
096	unid. cetacean	1
098	unid. whale	1

TOTAL 39

note: Dall's & harbor porpoises and pinnipeds are not included.

Biopsies (Juan Carlos Salinas)

Species	Weekly	Cumulative
Humpback whale	1	267
Fin whale	0	29
Blue whale	0	3
Sperm whale	2	6
Killer whale	3	25
Baird's beaked whale	0	3
Dall's porpoise	0	1
Cuvier's beaked whale*	0	1
*dead when sampled		

Photo-Project (Holly Fearnbach)

Species	Weekly #	Cumulative #
Humpback whale		
Catalog-quality flukes	2	478
Fin whale dorsal IDs	0	44
Sperm whale fluke IDs	3	12
Blue whale dorsal IDs	0	3
Minke whale dorsal IDs	1	1
Killer whale dorsal IDs	45	125
Baird's beaked whales	0	15
Northern right whale dolphins*	0	1
Pacific white-sided dolphins*	0	3
Cuvier's beaked whale (dead)	0	1
Steller sea lion	0	1

*number of groups photographed

Oceanographic Operations (Lillian Stuart)

Date	Number CTDs
8/12	1
8/13	0
8/14	0
8/15	1
8/16	1
8/17	1
8/18	1

Acoustics Squeakly Report (Shannon Rankin)

We had some successful recordings of killer whales this week (probable Residents).
More on that next week.

Poetry Corner

Drawers slamming open,
Chairs skidding 'round.
If it wasn't secure,
It's now on the ground.

Potted plants were
They shouldn't be
Please, double please,
Let's find a lee!

Prayers are answered,
Behind Adak we hide.
Liberty granted,
Down the ladder we slide.

To shore we go,
Adventure awaits.
Otters we sought,
But there was not trace.

Fair Adak we love,
Though sparse indeed.
One bar and one phone
What else d'ya need?

Back to the Bering,
Again as before.
Things not locked in place
Are now on the floor.

And so it goes,
On our floating home.
O'er calm seas and rough,
We continue to roam.

Siri Hakala

Crossing the Line

Crossing the line,
No cause for dread.
Yesterday to stern,
Tomorrow ahead.

Today is no more,
Water changed too.
From US to Russia
Where biopsy's taboo.

Vodka shots all around.
Yes, it would be grand.
To celebrate Russia,
'Til we couldn't stand.

But a dry ship we are,
And a dry ship we'll stay.
'Til Dutch Harbor sees us
On the 28th day.

**Beth Goodwin
& Siri Hakala**